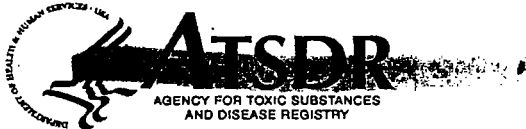


# ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD

1077373 - R8 SDMS



**Draft for Approval**

**June 02, 2008**

**Rev. 06-02-08, 4:30 pm, V3**

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## Media Announcement

**For Immediate Release: June 8, 2008**

### **ATSDR, EPA to Begin \$8 Million Research Initiative in Libby, MT** **Five-year project will close gaps in understanding health effects of asbestos exposure**

ATLANTA – The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) will invest \$8 million in a series of projects in Libby, Montana to advance the scientific understanding of vermiculite and asbestos amphibole that occurs naturally in the environment. The work is being funded by Superfund appropriations from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is expected to begin as early as September 1, 2008.

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The multi-year project will involve public health researchers in in Libby, as well as involve local organizations advising on the project. The research is expected to provide new information about lower-level asbestos exposures that will help doctors and others better respond to emerging health issues in populations that were exposed, especially those exposed as children.

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In signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the EPA to fund and implement this initiative, Dr. Howard Frumkin, Director of ATSDR and the National Centers for Environmental Health said, "ATSDR and EPA want to understand as much as possible about the health effects of Libby asbestos in order to ensure the best possible public health for Libby residents.

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Addressing knowledge gaps about the health effects of exposure to Libby amphibole asbestos will help us better advise EPA about clean-up strategies, and it will provide information to help community residents and health care professionals better prevent or mitigate exposures to Libby amphibole."

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"Clean up in Libby and the surrounding communities continues to be a national priority for EPA, and public health information is critical for us to achieve this objective," said Susan Bodine (Assistant Administrator, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response).

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ATSDR has outlined a multi-part research initiative estimated to take about five years to complete. Public health researchers in this initiative will oversee:

- Several epidemiological studies of persons exposed to Libby asbestos:
  - Health evaluation of persons originally exposed to Libby amphibole in childhood,
  - Expanded evaluation of persons exposed in Libby, including those with a lower level of environmental exposure,
  - Assessing whether there are health effects of exposure to Libby amphibole other than lung disease (e.g. auto-immune conditions).
- Enhancement of systems to track health outcomes related to exposure and to link this information with other existing databases.
- Creation of computer or mathematical models that will help explain what level of exposure (dosimetrics) leads to health effects.

Also part of the project is continuation of a study by ATSDR and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to compare digital (computer-generated) and X-rays.

This work supports the Libby Toxicity Assessment Action Plan (LTAAP) developed by EPA and ATSDR scientists after data gaps were identified while EPA was conducting its clean-up work in Libby. LTAAP includes 12 interrelated project areas designed to provide information to support the Libby Superfund baseline risk assessment as well as future evaluations of the ongoing remedial actions' (i.e., "five-year reviews") effectiveness. This information will be used to improve the understanding of the long-term public health effects associated with exposure to Libby amphibole.

The projects also respond to research needs identified in ATSDR's May 2003 Public Health Assessment that called for research into the risks associated with lower-level exposure to asbestos, and epidemiology studies to better characterize the link between exposure to asbestos and disease.

More information on the Libby asbestos amphibole project may be obtained from Dr. David Williamson, ATSDR Director of the Division of Health Studies.

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ATSDR, a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, evaluates the human health effects of exposure to hazardous substances.

Members of the news media can request an interview with ATSDR staff by calling the ATSDR Office of Communication at 404-488-0070.

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